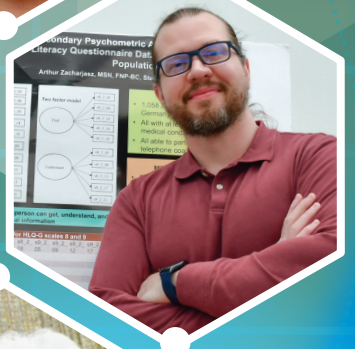


MIZZOUNURSING

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI SINCLAIR SCHOOL OF NURSING | 2023-2024

MIZZOU NURSING STRONG



ONE for the
Ages

2024

COMMUNITY HEALTH SUPPORT

FROM THE DEAN



In this edition of Mizzou Nursing, we explore “One for the Ages,” the impact of the Sinclair School of Nursing on people across the lifespan from school children to older adults. I invite you to join us as we collectively celebrate several milestones and reflect on our enduring commitment to excellence in nursing education, research, practice and community engagement.

We explore the concept of “aging well”, shedding light on how our community initiatives and research are improving the lives of older adults. In this article, we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Quality Improvement Program for Missouri (QIPMO). This program has been envisioned and led by Dr. Marilyn Rantz for the past quarter-century, QIPMO has been essential to improving the quality and safety of care for older adults living in nursing homes. New investigators are building on the history of nursing home research at the School of Nursing by examining how to use advance practice nurses more effectively in long-term care settings and how to use emerging technologies to communicate more effectively about patient care needs across care settings.

We showcase how our faculty clinical practice and Mizzou Nursing outreach programs are making a tangible difference in the lives of children within our communities. Through programs like the Scholars Choosing Health for Optimal Learning and Achievement Resource (SCHOLAR) Clinic and Camp Barnabas and

our partnership with Columbia Public Schools and Clarity Healthcare, we are reinforcing the bond between our school and the people we serve.

We are committed to supporting our students and nurses in practice through our Nursing Student and Career Success Initiative. We are building ways to support our current students’ nursing school journey by supporting their well-being and capacity for academic success. We are finding ways to improve the experience of transition into practice for our graduates. Additionally, we are developing ways for practicing nurses to support each other and be life-long learners.

This year also heralds the 60th anniversary of the Alpha Iota Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau, our nursing honor society that has been integral in fostering nursing leadership and scholarship. We are equally excited to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Student Nurses Association (SNA), a dynamic force in shaping the future of nursing through student engagement, advocacy and professional development.

As we reflect on these significant achievements and the collective progress we have made, let us remain inspired by the legacy we are building and the lives we are transforming.

Warmest regards,

Lori L. Popejoy, BSN ‘93, MS(N) ‘96, PhD ‘07
Sinclair School of Nursing



ON THE COVER

“One for the Ages” is not just a theme, but a testament to our enduring impact and our continuous pursuit of excellence.

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We want to hear from you! 

Send feedback about this issue, suggest future article ideas or share your story on how the Sinclair School of Nursing has impacted you.

Email us at mussoncommunication@missouri.edu.



From the Nursing Alumni Organization

Fellow Nursing Alumni and Friends of the Sinclair School of Nursing, I am delighted to bring greetings from the Nursing Alumni Organization!

Your Nursing Alumni Organization has been busy, and we look forward to exciting times this fall and spring. Mark your calendars

for Homecoming on October 19, 2024. This year you will want to Be Bold and Wear Gold as we welcome the Auburn Tigers. Please stay tuned for more information on how you can participate in the Homecoming Parade. Planning is also underway for our annual banquet on April 25, 2025, with the reunion to follow on April 26, 2025. Save the dates will be coming soon!

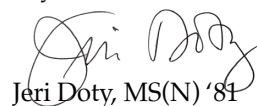
Two nursing faculty members, nominated by the Nursing Alumni Organization, will be recognized at the Mizzou Alumni Association Faculty and Alumni Awards

Celebration on November 8, 2024. Deidre Wipke-Tevis, BSN '85, will receive the 2024 Distinguished Faculty Award, and Amy Vogelsmeier, MS(N) '97, PhD '08, is a Faculty and Alumni Award recipient. Congratulations on their outstanding professional accomplishments and service to Mizzou.

We are very proud of all the accolades and awards the faculty and staff of the school continue to receive. Please read about Dean Lori Popejoy's selection as a fellow of the Gerontological Society of America. This prestigious status is peer recognition for her research contributions to the field of gerontology.

Also in this edition, learn more about the school's vision for the Nursing Student and Career Success Initiative. The first two success coaches for this important initiative have been hired...Stay tuned to hear of progress and how we, as alumni and friends, can lend support.

Happy fall and see you at Homecoming! MIZ-


Jeri Doty, MS(N) '81

President, Nursing Alumni Organization

34TH ANNUAL BANQUET & AWARDS CEREMONY REVIEW

2024 STUDENT AWARDS

7th Semester Student Award for Excellence - Avery Peach
8th Semester Student Award for Excellence - Caroline Gruber
Accelerated Student Award for Excellence - Ashton Young
RN-BSN Student Award for Excellence - Megan Castleberry
MS(N) Student Award for Excellence - Kelly Crain
DNP Student Award for Excellence - Alexa Snodgrass
PhD Student Award for Excellence - Karry Weston

2024 FACULTY & STAFF AWARDS

Staff Award for Excellence - Michael Haynes
Faculty Award for Excellence in Research - Anne Sales
Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching - Ellen Chiocca
Betty Crim Faculty Enhancement Award - Jennifer Furrer



CHECK OUT ALL OF THE PHOTOS AT
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/sinclairtigers/albums>





Serving the Community

Maintaining an Unveering Commitment to Children and Vulnerable Groups

As we consider our passion for providing care for the underserved, children fall heavily into that community. Being connected to school nursing is one way we can deliver on our mission at the Sinclair School of Nursing.

Written by Jack Wax, BS '73, MS '76, MA '87

In a world that often overlooks the health care needs of the young, the old and those who live in underserved communities, Sinclair School of Nursing stands out for its emphasis on preparing nursing students to provide compassionate evidence-based care to these groups. Instead of lamenting health care inequities – especially those affecting children -- the school is changing the status quo through innovative programs impacting nursing students, faculty and Missouri communities.

“Nurses are as critical to helping children get a strong and healthy start to life as they are to helping older adults stay healthy and continue to enjoy life,” says Dean Lori Popejoy. “I think of our programs as taking care of vulnerable people.”

A combination of time-tested programs along with newly launched initiatives are preparing Mizzou nurses to work with children and other professionals who care for them in schools and other settings. In Columbia, a collaboration between the School of Nursing, the Columbia Public Schools and Clarity Healthcare – a division of a federally qualified health center -- led to the opening this January of the Clarity Healthcare SCHOLAR Clinic for the school district’s students. In towns, such as New Bloomfield and Sedalia, groups of Mizzou Nursing students conduct screenings and prepare age-appropriate health education projects for school children. In Purdy, Missouri, at Camp Barnabas, an overnight camp for young people with disabilities or chronic health conditions, nursing students spend a week alongside campers, helping them enjoy summer fun. And because of faculty clinical practice



Faculty and staff at ribbon cutting for SCHOLAR Clinic.

arrangements, Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) with pediatric experience are continually educating not only the school’s nursing students but also practicing nurses and other professionals.

Sinclair School of Nursing assistant clinical professor and APRN, Megan Kruse, is an experienced clinician whose love of children motivates her work within the community and with nursing students. She unabashedly says, “I light up when a child enters the room.” Each school day, she can be found at the Clarity Healthcare SCHOLAR Clinic, where she evaluates, treats and counsels students of all ages. The new center is open Monday through Friday, year-round, even when school is not in session. It’s an inviting place, with two brightly decorated examination rooms and an onsite lab, located on school grounds in the heart of Columbia.

School-age children and preschoolers enrolled in the district come to the clinic for help with everything from ▼



Left to right - Superintendent of Columbia Public Schools Brian Yearwood, Kruse, Miller and Popejoy at the SCHOLAR Clinic.

sports physicals to vaccinations, from sore throats to help coping with difficult home situations. For parents, the clinic is a place where they can get convenient, affordable same-day care for their kids. And for school nurses and teachers, the clinic is a valuable resource that supports their own work of caring for and educating students. “The Columbia Public School District had a twofold motivation for participating in this program: Administrators were interested in both taking care of students’ health care needs and improving attendance,” Kruse says.

The clinic is available to all Columbia Public School students. Parents can call the SCHOLAR Clinic to make an appointment for their child, but most students are referred by their school’s nurse, while others seek care for themselves. Regardless of how they get there, all students must have parental consent. A sliding fee scale for services ensures no child is turned away. “We take care of everyone, whether the kids have private insurance, state-funded or none,” Kruse says.

While Columbia Public Schools are now able to provide more students with the health care and preventive services they need, the School of Nursing can offer nursing students a new and rewarding clinical experience. “Our students are learning what a community health center looks like,” says Kruse, who serves as preceptor to Mizzou nursing students throughout the year. Although Kruse has worked with children in a variety of settings, her role at the SCHOLAR Clinic has deepened her commitment to providing holistic care. A stash of nutritious snacks for students just outside her office is kept well supplied through a partnership with

Columbia’s Food Bank Market. “I am humbled by what I’ve experienced here,” she says. “I’ve never before had a child tell me that they can’t get enough to eat or that they don’t have a place to live.”

Kruse, BSN ‘16, has a cheerful and energetic personality that is typical of many nurses who gravitate to pediatric care. “Not only do pediatric nurses need a deep level of compassion for the human experience, they also are the type of people who can make care fun,” says undergraduate program director, Amber Vroman. “Some pediatric patients are living nightmares of chronic or acute illness, and we want to help them have a child’s life.”

Schoolwork is, of course, a major part of children’s lives. The role that Mizzou nurses play in bolstering children’s academic performance isn’t going unnoticed in Columbia schools. “Good health is fundamental to academic success,” says health services director for Columbia Public Schools, Jennifer Maddox, BSN ‘93, MHA ‘99. “With the option of receiving



Camper and nursing student, Kate Hoover, enjoying lunch at Camp Barnabas.

care at the SCHOLAR Clinic, students can avoid unnecessary emergency room visits or waiting days for an appointment with their physician. Additionally, students can establish a primary care home at the SCHOLAR Clinic.” Along with staffing the clinic with a nurse practitioner, the School of Nursing also conducts educational programs, available to the 40 school nurses assigned throughout the school district. Especially popular are the training sessions held at the School of Nursing’s Miller Family Simulation Center. ►

The interaction between the Sinclair School of Nursing and Columbia's school nurses creates a virtuous circle of education. The School of Nursing provides educational opportunities for the school district's nurses, and the nurses in turn precept nursing students. "If we support our school nurses, they are better equipped to care for the children in the community and mentor our nursing students," says assistant teaching professor and director of study abroad, Morgan Shahan.

Outreach efforts extend far beyond the MU campus and the Columbia area. This is the second year that the School of Nursing has been able to offer nursing students the option of spending a week at Camp Barnabas, where students befriend and assist youths with developmental disabilities or chronic illnesses. The bond that develops between campers and nursing students is meaningful to both groups, making the experience far more than just another way of working on required community health hours. Fun -- such as helping wheelchair-bound campers roll themselves down a waterslide -- is as much a part of the camp experience as delivering medications and tube feedings.

While not every student has the motivation or time for a weeklong camp experience, all seventh-semester students conduct health screenings of children in rural school settings, checking students' vision, hearing and blood pressure. Each semester, 120 nursing students head out in groups to places such as New Bloomfield, Centralia, Marshall and Jefferson City -- screening more than 1,000 children. In a separate program, nursing students create age-appropriate health education projects, which they present to school children. "This is a great opportunity for our students to get in front of healthy kids and to teach them how to stay that way," Shahan, DNP '19, says.

Nursing students aren't the only ones who get hands-on experience with children. The school ensures that APRN faculty maintain a clinical practice while teaching nursing students at all degree levels. "The APRN faculty have traditionally practiced outside the umbrella of the Sinclair School of Nursing," says Director of Faculty Clinical Practice Julie Miller. "We are building opportunities to bring them under the School of Nursing umbrella. Currently there are seven APRNs who have a clinical appointment." Tammy Rood, MS(N) '08, DNP '17, remains active in the Missouri Asthma Prevention and Control Program, traveling to clinics,



Students and faculty in front of Lauren's Wellhouse located at Camp Barnabas.

explaining best practices and distributing equipment to measure airflow. "What I love about being a nurse practitioner is the opportunity to educate others and to experience the rewards of nursing care," says Rood.

Nursing students also benefit from having APRNs in the classroom or clinical setting. "APRNs make a connection with students who see us role modeling what being an expert in a certain care area looks like," says Vroman, MS(N) '14. "They can hear that expertise as we tell stories and give real-life examples of applying the nursing knowledge, skills and abilities they are learning in those various environments."

Sinclair School of Nursing faculty APRNs precept nursing students while benefiting the community through their clinical practice. For example, Jessica Peuterbaugh, DNP '23, splits her time between teaching pediatric courses and working in MU Health Care's Pediatric General Surgery unit. "It's a win for the community where these individuals practice and the school," says Miller, BSN '91, MS(N) '13, DNP '17.

Counting each win is an important way to keep morale high among faculty and students. The challenges of meeting the health care needs of children and those who live in underserved areas can seem insurmountable. But the School of Nursing is proving that they aren't. "As clinicians, we can help bridge the gap between the health that people currently experience and where they want to be," says Popejoy. "It takes a competent evidence-based nursing practice to accomplish that." Each program is designed with that in mind. And, as for the future, "We will continue looking for opportunities to grow our presence in school systems and in rural communities," Popejoy concludes. ■

Student Nurses' Association Celebrates 70 Years!



In 1953, the Mizzou chapter of the Student Nurses' Association (SNA) was founded to mentor students preparing for a profession in nursing. The purpose of the chapter is to give nursing students the opportunity to build leadership, serve the community and engage with mentors and peers for life-long learning.

The SNA has a rich history of leadership and advocacy. In 1975, together with the Nursing Student Council, they launched a campaign to actively lobby legislators at the State Capital for an appropriation to build a School of

Nursing building at the University of Missouri to house the nursing program. The first of two appropriations was secured shortly after to construct the first School of Nursing building on the MU campus.

Today, the organization continues to thrive having just earned their second Stellar School Designation in 2023, the only chapter to have this honor in the state of Missouri. The award recognizes the chapter for their ongoing involvement in the National Student Nurses' Association (NSNA) and their commitment to the shared governance and professional development.

Donna Otto, BSN '72, MS(N) '81, is the faculty advisor for the local chapter. She encourages the students to participate in the state and national programs of NSNA. "Through active participation students learn the value of professional organizations, the importance of advocating for the well-being and safety of the populations they serve and promoting the practice of nursing."

For their 70th anniversary, SNA held a celebration and tree dedication ceremony in the courtyard of the newest School of Nursing building. The tree will represent the strong roots of the organization's past and the promise of thriving growth for many years to come.

Sigma Theta Tau Alpha Iota Chapter Celebrates 60 Years!

Sigma Theta Tau's purpose is to recognize superior achievement and the development of leadership qualities, to foster high professional standards, to encourage creative works and to strengthen commitment to the ideals and purposes of the nursing profession. On December 12, 1964, 39 students, faculty and alumni members were initiated as charter members of the Alpha Iota Chapter in Columbia, Missouri.

Assistant Teaching Professor Hillary Claunch is the current president of the chapter. "It's truly a moment to tip our nursing caps to the remarkable history that has shaped Sigma Theta Tau at the Sinclair School of Nursing. This milestone is a testament to the incredible nurses who have been the heart and soul of our organization," states Claunch.

As we honor the past 60 years, a few notable highlights include establishing the Alpha Iota Chapter Sigma Research Grant and the Alpha Iota Sigma Evidence-Based Practice/Performance Improvement Project Grant. Both grants award a graduate nursing student



annually to provide support for research studies. In 2021, and again in 2023, the Alpha Iota Chapter received the Chapter Key award at the international convention designating them as an excelling chapter of Sigma Theta Tau. Plans are underway to have a formal celebration on October 10, 2024.

Beyond the CLASSROOM

Providing programs and pathways to support healthy and sustainable careers for faculty, students and practicing nurses.

Written by Dale Smith, BJ '88



Christyl Barnes BSN '16, MS(N) '22, recalls enduring life as “a ball of anxiety” during her student days at the Sinclair School of Nursing. No matter how good her grades – and they were strong – she couldn’t seem to muster the commensurate confidence. Nervous before tests, she’d cry in the bathroom. Fortunately, when faculty members discovered what she was going through, they rallied – mentoring her, connecting her with services, enveloping her in a web of emotional and professional support. With that and her own hard work, she came out the other side, earning a bachelor’s degree in nursing.

Barnes’ bio may not sound like the prototype of an up-and-coming faculty member, but that’s just what she has become. She went on to earn a master’s degree in nursing leadership, and the School of Nursing recently hired her as its first career success coach, one of two starting work with the fall 2024 semester. A grant co-written by Robin Harris, MS(N) '06, and Amber Vroman, MS(N) '14, funded by the Missouri State Board of Nursing covers the success coach

salaries for one year as an early, but vital step in the school’s nursing student success care model.

The new Nursing Student and Career Success Initiative, which seeks to support and retain nurses across their career trajectory grew out of the vision of Dean Lori Popejoy, and her shared concerns over the worsening nursing shortage. “At one end of the spectrum, we see new nurses leaving a stressful profession early at a time of life when career and personal life often collide. At the other end, baby boomers are aging out of the profession. And in the middle, nurses are leaving, albeit in smaller numbers, for a variety of reasons.” In a recent study by Xiaoming Zhang, a research scientist at the Cleveland Clinic, it was identified that the nursing shortage will reach 510,394 by 2030. In another publication, “The Future of Nursing 2020-2030: Charting a Path to Achieve Health Equity,” it states attrition from retirements alone will cost the profession up to two million of experience-years annually over the next six years.

Looking After Students

Phase one of the initiative proceeds from the observation that, compared to past decades, today’s students are dealing with more (or better recognized) stress and mental illness. “I worry a lot about our students,” Popejoy says. “They are young, smart, successful and now they are working – sometimes struggling – through a competitive program. The strain builds up.”

When Barnes needed support a decade ago, individual faculty members had to spot the problem, evaluate and take action. Other faculty may have noted different issues. Back then nobody knew the whole story. “That’s where success coaches come in. They are faculty members with clinical expertise so they can mentor students professionally,” says Harris, associate dean for academic affairs. “But they will also act as referral hubs, connecting students with services such as counseling when necessary, just as a practicing nurse would coordinate care in a clinical setting.” And the success coach will be part of the feedback loop. They will know, for instance, whether a student they refer to disability services made contact and got what they needed. ▼

"It's a centralized approach," says Vroman, undergraduate program director. "We can't let any student fall through the cracks. The success coaches will be a consistent presence as long as a student needs them."

As Barnes prepares for her first semester as a success coach, she is on a mission to make students feel like they belong at the School of Nursing and can succeed in the program. That goal takes on challenges beyond the stress and mental illness mentioned earlier. For instance, current nursing students who were in high school during the height of COVID-19 spent a lot of instruction time at home learning remotely. "It's hard for some of these students to be in-seat for classes," Barnes says. "They are different learners than those of us who always attended lectures."

"Everyone is afraid to admit that, 'I need help,'" Barnes continues. As a teacher of pharmacology at the School of Nursing since 2021, Barnes has a history of being a faculty member that students seek out when in crisis. Now faculty will be referring students to her as well. When that happens, Barnes will craft a unique plan for each student, a holistic approach to making them feel supported, reducing their stress and keeping them in school. She has ready resources to draw upon. The school offers in-house counseling services in collaboration with the Department of Psychological Services, and the curriculum includes material on handling difficult discussions, reducing stress and responding to stressful workplace scenarios. In addition, she will touch base with other faculty, connect students to campus resources and meet with them weekly, serving as an accountability partner, someone to keep them going.

"Struggling students need another person to help them stay on track," she says.

What will success look like? For starters, each student's plan should come to an end that finds them functioning independently. Beyond assessing metrics such as stress levels, grade point averages and time to graduation, Barnes sets a larger frame. "As nurses, we care for others. We support the physician's plan of care. We support our patients. To thrive at the center of all that, we need to take care of ourselves first. The School of Nursing builds

By 2030,
the nursing shortage
will reach 510,394.

students up, gives them a voice – the confidence to be at the center of the care plan, to advocate for patients, to question orders when necessary, to use the judgment we've taught them."

Next Steps

Popejoy's vision for the Nursing Student and Career Success Initiative includes a center that would continue funding the career success coaches and do much more to reduce the nursing shortage.

Newly minted nurses can also struggle with the pace and complexity of stressed health care organizations, as well as doubts that they are ready for such responsibility. "It's a tough profession, female-dominated, and we

see a lot of young women coming out of school, taking jobs, getting married and starting to raise a family all at once," Harris says. A center could look at how to provide support and guidance to keep them in their jobs.

In collaboration with the School of Journalism, Popejoy is examining the school-to-work transition of new nurses, 18 percent of whom leave the profession in the first year, according to the American Nurses Association. "We are trying to understand the stressors inherent in this early phase when nurses are so vulnerable," Popejoy says. Once we do, we can design supportive programs at the individual and organizational levels."

A center could also help nurses who have left the profession by investigating ways of bringing them back. Established practitioners have dropped out of nursing for various reasons, from burnout to injuries to the strain of dealing with COVID-19 to a rise in violence against nurses and other providers.

Popejoy says she wants to help them find a place in nursing again. "If they have a work-related injury or are burned out, we can help them look for positions in a different area of nursing. Perhaps we can help them retool for virtual roles or others that aren't necessarily less stressful but are perceived as more autonomous, including as a faculty member. We want everyone to find the best version of themselves. Many nurses out there still have a lot to give." ■



Whitney Harlan joined the Sinclair School of Nursing this summer as our senior director for advancement. Whitney brings an array of experience from her long tenure at the University of Missouri, most recently serving in the College of Engineering. She has been with the university since September 2009, holding various student programming and advancement positions. When she's not engaging with our alumni in efforts to advance the mission on our school and Mizzou, Whitney enjoys spending time with her husband and two sweet boys.

If you have any questions or would like to introduce yourself to Whitney, she would be excited to hear from you!

Email: harlanw@missouri.edu or call 573-882-5689.

NURSING STUDENT AND CAREER SUCCESS

Providing programs and pathways to support healthy and sustainable careers for faculty, students and practicing nurses



AROUND THE SCHOOL



Dean Lori Popejoy Selected Fellow of the Gerontological Society of America (GSA)

Lori Popejoy was named among 60 exemplary professionals as the newest fellows to the Gerontology Society of America. Fellow status is peer recognition for outstanding contributions to the field of gerontology and represents the highest category of GSA membership. This distinction is given for diverse activities that include research, teaching, administration, public service, practice and notable participation in the society.

Jeri Doty Receives 2023 Faculty Alumni Award

Congratulations to Jeri Doty, MSN '81, on her Faculty and Alumni Award from the Mizzou Alumni Association. Alumni are chosen for outstanding professional achievement and loyal, devoted service to their community and alma mater. Doty was chosen for her many accomplishments, including pivotal roles at MU Health Care and the Sinclair School of Nursing.



Kimberly Powell Honored for Pioneering Work in Health Informatics and Gerontology

Kimberly Powell, an assistant professor at the Sinclair School of Nursing, received two distinguished honors in the past year. Powell was first inducted as a fellow into the American Medical Informatics Association for her contributions to health informatics and gerontology. In May, it was announced that she would be one of 16 fellows joining the fifth cohort of the Betty Irene Moore Fellowship for Nurse Leaders and Innovators at the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at UC Davis.

Powell's scholarly work focuses broadly on health informatics and data sharing with providers, patients and family caregivers using technologies such as patient portals, text messaging applications, health information exchange and telehealth to improve patient outcomes.



Jessica Mueller Receives Barbara S. Uehling Award

Congratulations to Jessica Mueller, this year's recipient of the Barbara S. Uehling Award for Administrative Excellence. This award goes to a university staff member who has demonstrated qualities of leadership, administrative excellence, and has contributed in some way to improve working conditions and the quality of life for MU staff. Jessica has worked at the school for the past 19 years as the senior project support coordinator for the Quality Improvement Program for Missouri (QIPMO) and Dr. Marilyn Rantz.





How Nurses Played an Important Role in the Integration of MU Health Care and Capital Region Medical Center

By: Andrea Morrow-Cronin

MU Health Care and Capital Region Medical Center became a unified health system on Jan. 1, 2024, combining the rich history of each institution — one as an academic health system and the other as a community-based hospital. The two were no strangers to one another, having formed an affiliation in 1997 to provide the best care for patients throughout mid-Missouri. After nearly three decades



Deb Deeken
BSN '92, MS(N) '10, DNP '19

of working together, the two organizations officially integrated in 2024.

With nurses being the forefront of patient care, their knowledge and representation in the integration process was critical to its success. Deb Deeken, chief nursing officer for Capital Region Medical Center, was tasked with leading the effort to integrate both systems' nurses into one unified workforce.

Deeken worked with Shannon Fucik, MU Health Care's chief nursing officer, to form that nursing integration team, creating sub-teams to meet regularly and make the integration as seamless as possible.

"It was the work of these teams that helped us to align our nursing practices and processes that were critical to happen before January 1," Deeken said. "There's a lot under the nursing umbrella and we had to sift through all of that to figure out the most time-sensitive priorities we needed to integrate on." ▼



Deeken presenting \$750 in continuing education funds to certified nurses.

Starting With the Basics

The nursing team began by identifying the policies and processes MU Health Care and Capital Region did differently, what they did similarly and how they could combine the systems to be better together.

“MU Health Care is an academic health system, and Capital Region is a community health system — so how do we honor both and pull together the best of both as we integrate? We were alike in so many ways,” Deeken said.

During the transition from two separate teams to one unified organization, communication was a major focus.

“One of the ways we’ve been able to enhance communication is through a tiered huddle process on the front lines and for all units,” Deeken said. “In those huddles, we discuss any impacts to staffing or patient care and we also share quality data. Time-sensitive information is also shared through this tiered huddle process, which wasn’t as well established before the integration.”



Deeken rounding with a nurse at Capital Region Medical Center.

Daily huddles were building the foundation for more effective communication. Another way to ensure all nurses were up to speed was implementing a monthly nursing newsletter.

“The newsletter is packed full of information for our front-line nursing staff about policies, processes and recognition,” Deeken said. “The newsletter is another way we can recognize our staff and anyone who’s won awards or passed state boards. It also provides information on training opportunities and how to become involved in committees.”



Nurses participating in MU Health Care’s Nurse Residency Program, a new addition to Capital Region.

Opening Patient Beds and Expanding Services

While many changes during the integration included working through policies and processes, one substantial change was staffing and available bed numbers in Jefferson City. Within months of the integration, Capital Region opened 30 inpatient beds which had previously been closed due to limited staff. The availability of those beds allows more patients to stay closer to home in the Jefferson City area and allows for more nursing roles at Capital Region.

“Opening beds includes hiring for many more nursing positions at Capital Region,” Deeken said. “We are busy recruiting for these positions and others throughout the hospital.”

The opening of so many beds also presents opportunities to add and expand programs.

“It has been very exciting because we have new surgeons and practitioners which means new surgical programs and expansion of current programs like our rehab program. We have opened every bed that’s currently possible at Capital Region. We have seen dramatic increases in our average daily census as well as our number of discharges from the hospital.”

Enhancing Educational Opportunities

The integration is also providing nurses with more opportunities to learn and expand their clinical knowledge. One of those opportunities is MU Health Care’s Nurse Residency Program, a 12-month program which includes seminars, hands-on training and simulations that allow new nurses to gain additional knowledge and training beyond what they would learn in a standard orientation program. ►

"We have attracted more graduate nurses because Capital Region now has the residency program — nursing students are asking for it," Deeken said. "They want to feel supported in their first year transitioning from education to practice, and this helps to solidify their skills and exposes them to more training on the job in cohorts with people they're working with across the entire MU Health Care system."

Another benefit for nurses and employees across the MU Health Care system is the Tuition Assistance Program.

"There have been nurses locally in Jefferson City who have chosen to work at Capital Region rather than applying elsewhere because of the tuition assistance benefit," Deeken said. "We have seen a higher number of our staff enrolling in nursing programs and getting their bachelor's and master's degrees."



Nurses presenting during the Nurse Residency Program.

Through the tuition assistance benefit at the University of Missouri, full-time employees will receive up to a 75% discount on tuition to advance their careers. The MU Sinclair School of Nursing offers distance-mediated programs for an RN to BSN, master's, DNP, PhD and graduate certificates so it is easy for nurses in Jefferson City to enhance their education while still working and living in their community.

In addition to tuition reimbursement, funding for continuing education is allocated to nurses who hold a specialty certification.

"All nurses who become certified in their specialty receive \$750 annually they can put towards educational offerings for the next year," Deeken said. "That includes educational conferences, purchasing books or materials to help

enhance or maintain their clinical knowledge and continue to grow."

Empowering Nurses to Make Decisions and Improvements to Care

At MU Health Care, nurses are encouraged to use their voices to help shape the workplace. Two programs that empower nurses to develop their skills and share their ideas are the Nursing Clinical Ladder Program and Clinical Shared Leadership.

The Nursing Clinical Ladder Program is a yearly incentive program in which front-line nurses are rewarded for research projects, committee work and personal and professional development. As of July 2024, MU Health Care has paid out over \$278,000 to nurses taking part in the clinical ladder program. And now nurses in Jefferson City have access to the same program and resources.

Clinical Shared Leadership engages nurses and health care professionals at all levels to evaluate nursing and patient care across the MU Health Care system. The group creates shared accountability for improving patient and employee experience, rewarding professional nursing performance, standardizing practices and policies and supporting the mission, vision and values of MU Health Care.

"We are in the process of building the Clinical Shared Leadership structure in Jefferson City because that has never really been in place here before," Deeken said. "This is an exciting change because front-line nursing staff have a voice in developing nursing processes and policies and in driving improvements in patient care."

While the integration is ongoing, Deeken considers the nursing integration to be a resounding success that allows MU Health Care nurses to have more options and opportunities to grow moving forward. Nurses can steer their careers in the direction of their choice while saving and improving lives throughout mid-Missouri.

"The success of the integration is a testament to the hard work and dedication that everyone here has to serve their community," Deeken said. "We can enhance the services we have available, add more services and open more beds, which means more roles for our nurses and other clinicians to fill and grow in. Being able to make that impact and witnessing the incredible teamwork it took from everyone to make these changes happen makes me incredibly proud." ■



Lending a Helping Hand in Health Care

Alviria Nishat, a dedicated student at the Sinclair School of Nursing, seamlessly blends theory with practice as she gains invaluable hands-on experience as a nurse assistant for MU Health Care.

Written by Brian Consiglio, BJ '19, photos by Sam O'Keefe, BJ '09, MA '24

Nurse assistants are the unsung heroes of the health care industry. Their crucial yet often behind-the-scenes work allows registered nurses (RNs), who have more advanced training and can perform a wider range of medical tasks, to focus on care only they can provide.

Nurse assistants work closely with patients — monitoring vital signs, assisting with personal hygiene, moving patients around the hospital and more. For someone new to the field, these tasks can often prove stressful. But when University of Missouri junior, Alviria Nishat, became an MU Health Care nursing assistant in 2023, she entered the job with confidence.

And it's all thanks to courses she took at the MU Sinclair School of Nursing.

Earn While You Learn

Nishat, a nursing major, was one of 33 students selected for the first cohort of the Unlicensed Assistive Personnel (UAP) course. Robin Harris, MS(N) '06, and Jennifer O'Connor, PhD '19, were awarded a grant from the Missouri Department of Economic Development which resulted in the three-hour, semester long class.

The grant has three primary missions:

- Provide Mizzou students with real-world experience working as nurse assistants.
- Address severe nursing staffing shortages that are impacting the health care industry.
- Discover if nursing is a career path they are interested in pursuing.

Students begin the course in the nursing school's simulation lab brushing up on their skills and then are paid by MU Health Care to complete their clinical hours toward their certification.

The UAP course is taught by Nicole Bartow, DNP '22, a former perinatal nurse at MU Health Care and one of only a handful of Missourians who is officially certified as a health care simulation expert.

The National Center for Education Statistics reports that 40% of college students work 10-35 hours per week. With this UAP program, Mizzou students can work in a field they are interested in pursuing a career in, build their resume and ease a critical workforce shortage all at the same time. ►



Nishat (right) and her peers spent many hours in the School of Nursing's Miller Family Simulation Center before getting to work with patients in the hospital.



Bartow (right), serves as a mentor to Nishat and all the students in the UAP program.

"This program is groundbreaking for the state of Missouri," Bartow said. "There are large vacancies for both registered nurses and nurse assistants, and having more trained assistants eases the burden on overworked RNs who have been struggling with burnout, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic."

The program is just one way Mizzou offers students hands-on learning opportunities, a philosophy known as the Missouri Method.

Bartow's favorite part of her job is teaching students and helping prepare them to succeed in the workforce. "Alvira's caring nature will make her a fantastic nurse, as I have noticed if someone else in class is struggling with something, she will come right alongside them and help them," Bartow said.

In addition to the coursework, MU Health Care provides the clinical care experiences and pays each student to complete clinical hours required for certification. After completing coursework and clinical hours, students can sit for an exam to receive a certified nursing assistant certificate.

A Stepping Stone to Success

Nishat, who grew up in India and has long dreamed of being a nurse, said the experience only solidified her desire to pursue the career.

"Thanks to this program, so many doors were opened for me, and I gained so much confidence in myself and my decision-making," she said. "The hands-on learning experiences helped me boost my resume, get into nursing school and learn more about what career path in the nursing industry I want to pursue in the future."

Nishat said the program is not only helping nurses, patients and the health care industry, it also helped her own educational journey.

"It was a very rewarding experience, as I got a first-hand look at seeing how busy nurses are, and I got to help them ensure the patients received the care and attention they need," Nishat said. "This program helped confirm my desire to become a nurse."

In just a year, the program has already been a success. Nishat and her 32 peers from the program's initial cohort decided to stay on as MU Health Care employees. More than 125 students applied for the second cohort of the program, and the program can serve as a model nationwide.

Just Getting Started

The three-year grant started in fall 2023 and runs until 2026, with the goal of training approximately 300 Mizzou students.

"The first cohort of 33 students worked for a total of 5,000 hours in University Hospital during fall 2023. They helped our frontline teams tremendously by augmenting our workforce and providing direct patient care," said Shanon Fucik, chief nursing officer of MU Health Care. "The clinical experiences that they are getting will be invaluable, and hopefully many of the students consider MU Health Care as a potential employer after graduation."

Another cohort of 40 Mizzou students were taught by Bartow last spring, and more Mizzou students are enrolled in her class this fall. ■



Sean C. Pridgeon, DNP '21
ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

During his 15-year career at MU Health Care (MUHC), Pridgeon has served in various roles, demonstrating exceptional nursing leadership skills, strengths and professional ambitions. He is recognized as an engaged professional with a passion for MUHC nursing workforce well-being.

Since graduating with his Doctorate in Nursing Practice, he has shared his professional talents and knowledge locally, regionally and nationally. During his 20-month tenure as a DNP, he has been promoted to the director of professional practice for the Office of Professional Practice at MUHC. He demonstrates an unwavering commitment to elevating the nursing profession. He oversees the American Nurses Association Magnet program, nursing professional development, evidence-based practice, nursing research, patient education and policy.

Pridgeon helped design institution-wide practices for MUHC's workforce mental well-being. As an active mentor for MUHC's for YOU team, he is always willing to take time to support a co-worker. MUHC leveraged his unique expertise, interpersonal skills and crisis management experience working to guide MUHC's prolonged COVID-19 response plan.

Pridgeon advocates for the Sinclair School of Nursing (SSON)

serving on multiple committees. He is a member of the dean's SSON-MUHC Partnership Steering Committee to enhance the academic-clinical partnership. As an avid student supporter, he identifies opportunities to build and expand academic-clinical collaboration. He is an active participant in various organizations such as a member of the Nursing Alumni Organization board of directors and recent Research Committee chair for Sigma Theta Tau, Alpha Iota Chapter.

In addition to his numerous contributions to nursing, he served as a dedicated military leader in the United States Army Reserves. While pursuing his doctoral degree, Pridgeon completed a combat tour to Afghanistan with the 932nd forward surgical team. His commanding officer, Colonel Raymond Eisenmann, reflects on his performance in combat "triaging and rendering care [for] those in need after being struck by enemy fire." Eisenmann believes Pridgeon's "ability to perform under extreme pressure in very austere environments is a shining testament to his caring professionalism." He was awarded honors for bravely serving his country. Most treasured was the Combat Medic Badge, signifying he has cared for soldiers while under enemy fire.

Pridgeon's journey paints a picture of a remarkable individual who has wasted no time cultivating an environment for nurses to feel supported and valued. His contributions will continue to inspire and impact the nursing profession for years to come. Pridgeon is a consummate professional, innovative thinker, outstanding leader, and above all, he exemplifies the spirit of Mizzou Nursing.



Denice Mendenhall
HONORARY ALUMNI AWARD

Mendenhall stands as a testament to the profound impact one individual can have on nursing. She earned her BSN from Ohio State University and MS(N) from the University of Washington; however, her heart resonates with Mizzou. Her distinguished career as a clinical instructor at the school commenced in 1990 and continued until her retirement in 2023, leaving an enduring legacy in the hearts of students, faculty and staff.

Described by colleagues as a cornerstone of the undergraduate program, Mendenhall has been pivotal in shaping the educational landscape for decades. Amber Vroman, MS(N) '14, acknowledges her role as a mentor, stating she "takes faculty under her wing and opens her treasure chest of tips and tools." Amy Stone, BSN '18, MS(N) '21, considers Mendenhall a "rare find, harnessing an unparalleled wealth of nursing knowledge and generously sharing it with colleagues and students." Her commitment to innovative teaching techniques and implementing new learning strategies kept her courses current. She served as chair of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, frequently taking the lead with curriculum revisions and preparing for accreditation reviews over the years.

Emilie Maas, BSN '23, credits Mendenhall for her monumental growth as a future nurse. Megan Egli, BSN '22, remembers Mendenhall for helping her persevere through a challenging period. Mendenhall's true motivation lies in her students. She believes students should be the driving force behind instructors' efforts to make active learning a reality.

Mendenhall instructed students at Boone Hospital Center with clinical rotations on the oncology unit from 1995-2023. She served on Boone's Nursing Research and Evidenced-Based Practice Committee from 2009-2023. She was instrumental in developing a positive relationship with Boone as a clinical partner over the years, underscoring her dedication to education, patient care and evidenced-based nursing practice.

She was recognized as the 2020 Grant Award for Academic Excellence, the Betty Crim Faculty Enhancement Award in 2013 and 2003 and the 2011 Excellence in Service Award. She was also an active member of the Alpha Iota Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau National Honor Society, where she served as president from 2005-2009 and again 2022-2023.

Mendenhall left an indelible mark on Mizzou Nursing. Her outstanding achievements, passion, commitment and relentless pursuit of knowledge have enriched the nursing profession and the educational experience of students at Mizzou.



Glenda Dahlstrom, MS(N)'86, PhD '02

ALUMNI OF THE YEAR

Dahlstrom retired after 50 years of dedicated service as a nursing administrator and educator in the Jefferson City, Missouri, community. She served as vice president of patient care services and chief nursing officer of Capital Region Medical Center, vice president of acute care services and chief nursing officer of St. Mary's Health

Center. Her tenure as a professor of nursing science at Lincoln University further exemplified her dedication to education and mentorship.

In Dahlstrom's nursing career, she distinguished herself in clinical practice, nursing leadership and nursing education. Dahlstrom's embodiment of nursing extended far beyond the confines of traditional clinical practice; it encompassed a multifaceted approach characterized by compassion, leadership and a pursuit of excellence. Her tenure as the chief nursing officer at Capital Region Medical Center during the COVID-19 pandemic underscored her ability to navigate through crises with poise and expertise. Her talents led the hospital and provided an invaluable source of knowledge and reliability for every staff member and patient. Sarah Morrow, vice president of human resources, worked closely with Dahlstrom during this challenging period. She praised her dynamic and supportive leadership style. "Glenda's passion for nursing was evident in every decision she made. She

not only adapts gracefully to unpredictable circumstances but also possesses a gift for delivering tough messages with kindness and effectiveness. Morrow notes, "I often joked Glenda's true superpower was her kindness."

Beyond her service at Capital Region Medical Center and St. Mary's Health Center, Dahlstrom's impact reverberated throughout the health care landscape, marked by a string of notable achievements and leadership roles. As a faculty member at Lincoln University, she led the design and implementation of a registered nurse to Bachelor of Science Nursing completion program and assisted in transforming their associate degree to a baccalaureate education. She played a leading role in designing and implementing a nationally certified surgical technologist program. Her contributions also extended to workforce development initiatives, such as "Caring for Missourians," a program which aimed to address critical nursing shortages in the region. Her commitment to excellence and the impact of her work has earned multiple honors and awards.

In retirement, Dahlstrom continues to serve as adjunct faculty for the Lincoln University School of Nursing, where she can inspire and empower the next generation of nurses. She leaves an indelible mark on the hearts of those she touches and it is evident that her legacy will continue to inspire and shape the future of nursing practice for generations to come.



Cynthia McCurren, BSN '72, MS(N) '81

CITATION OF MERIT AWARD

McCurren serves as the dean and professor at the University of Michigan-Flint School of Nursing. She brings more than 30 years of leadership experience in nursing education, influencing hospital boards, senior services, advisory committees and many nursing and

health forums both in Michigan and nationally. Through her dynamic leadership, she has fostered collaborations between academia and practice, driving innovation through initiatives like the nursing "think tank" and the dedicated education unit. Colleagues attest to her impact, describing her as a catalyst for meaningful change whose passionate nature is contagious. She is committed to the transformation of health care, academic-practice partnerships and ensuring a diverse student body. She inspires her colleagues and interdisciplinary partners to tackle the toughest challenges in health care today.

In her roles within the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, McCurren has been a formidable force, shaping national nursing policies and standards. Over the past 19 years, she has served in roles of increasing influence, including four years as an elected member of the board of directors, and as chair-elect and board chair from 2020-2024. Her contributions

were instrumental as co-chair for the Essentials Task Force (2018-2021), where she helped develop the 2021 Essentials, transforming nursing education through a competency-based approach.

McCurren's commitment to transforming health care extended beyond academia. She played a pivotal role in establishing the Bonnie Wesorick Center for Health Care Transformation. With a million-dollar endowment, the center serves as a hub for pioneering research and initiatives aimed at driving systemic change in the health care landscape. The center's work focuses on improving health care delivery, patient outcomes and overall system efficiency, embodying McCurren's vision for a transformed health care system.

McCurren was inducted as a fellow in the American Academy of Nursing in 2023. Despite her numerous accolades and achievements, McCurren remains grounded in her dedication to nursing, considering it the greatest honor to call herself a nurse. Her colleagues and students recognize her humility and dedication, noting that these qualities make her an exceptional leader and mentor. Her life's work serves as a testament to the transformative power of visionary leadership and the enduring impact of a dedicated caregiver's heart. Her leadership and compassion have paved the way for future generations of nurses, ensuring that the profession continues to evolve and thrive.



Susan Wuest Devaney, BSN '72, MS(N) '80

HUMANITARIAN OF THE YEAR

With more than 50 years of experience as a nurse, Devaney is a distinguished health care professional with extensive expertise in nursing education, leadership and community health.

Driven by a strong commitment to community health and the advancement of nursing practice, Devaney has dedicated her career to teaching, consulting and developing nursing programs. She has held numerous academic positions, including associate professor in the clinical nurse leader program and the nurse educator program in Nursing at Central Methodist University (CMU). Her leadership roles have extended to serving as associate dean at CMU's College of Graduate and Extended Studies. She retired from CMU following a successful 39-year career.

Devaney's influence is evident in her extensive involvement with professional organizations. She is a long-standing member of the Missouri Nurses Association, Sigma Theta Tau, the Missouri League for Nursing and the National League for Nursing (NLN). She has contributed to nursing education through her roles on various committees and task forces, including the NLN Certification Governance Committee. In recognition of her contributions, she received the Outstanding Leadership Award from the National League for Nursing in September 2009.

Her dedication is further demonstrated through her numerous publications and presentations. Her work covers a range of topics, from e-mentoring in public health practice

to the application of Christian values in nursing. Devaney's scholarly contributions have not only advanced the field of nursing but have also provided valuable insights for integrating technology and innovative teaching methods into nursing education.

In 2012, Devaney took her passion for community health and service in a new direction by volunteering for the Jefferson City Diocesan Faith-Based Health Ministry, where she became a certified parish nurse. In 2014, she co-founded the Columbia Catholic Tri-Parish Health Ministry with several colleagues. This ministry provides programming focused on a holistic approach to health, addressing body, mind and spirit. She continues to serve on the diocesan committee and works post-pandemic to revive health ministry efforts. She is passionate about health education and enjoys working on programs that address health disparities and improve health literacy.

Devaney is recognized for her compassionate care and support of vulnerable populations through her volunteer efforts. One nominator described her as "our shepherd, keeping tabs on parishioners, visiting those in need of nursing and spiritual care, bringing soup to the ill and being present for those dying and their families. During COVID-19, she initiated Zoom meetings to bring us together. She finds the lost sheep and carries us home."

Her boundless generosity and passion for nursing have shaped a remarkable life dedicated to selfless service and is why Devaney embodies the essence of a humanitarian.



Marjorie Cole

DISTINGUISHED FRIEND OF THE SCHOOL

Cole has been reshaping school nursing and nursing leadership for three decades. She became a Registered Nurse in 1964 and continued to be a life-long learner, earning her Master's in Nursing Science in 1999, from the University of Missouri in St. Louis. As the state school nurse consultant for the Missouri Department of Health and

Senior Services since 2000, she has been a pivotal advocate, empowering school nurses to be change-makers in the lives of children and families. Through her visionary leadership, she pioneered comprehensive training programs, equipping

school nurses with the skills and knowledge needed to address the complex needs of students. Cole's influence extends nationally, shaping policy and practice. Her emphasis on comprehensive care and community engagement transcends mere tasks, fostering a culture of holistic health care. Cole's legacy inspires nurses to prioritize meaningful impact over quotas, redesigning the narrative of school health services. Dean Lori Popejoy explains, "The Sinclair School of Nursing believes that all children deserve health care and Marge has personified those efforts to prioritize Missouri children. We are delighted to bestow the 2024 Distinguished Friend of the School award upon Marge, a genuine community leader and tireless advocate for school nurses."

Aging Well



A Legacy of Care and Innovation

By Marcus Wilkins, BA '03

In Missouri, a quiet evolution in health care innovation is transforming the lives of older adults. Through the relentless dedication, pioneering research and unwavering pursuit of excellence by the faculty at the MU Sinclair School of Nursing, the health and well-being of older adults have significantly improved.

Dean Lori Popejoy has been involved in the collaborations driving these changes. She and her colleagues are committed to ensuring that older adults in Missouri have the option to remain in their homes and live their best lives. Now, as a leader in the school, she sees firsthand the profound impact Mizzou Nursing faculty has on the health and well-being of older adults in the Show-Me State. "I know without a doubt that Mizzou Nursing has set a national standard in developing models of care and aging-in-place that led to improved health outcomes for older adults," states Popejoy. "The ongoing commitment to advancing research by our exceptional and multidisciplinary faculty here at the university promises a bright future for the aging well journey."

The Beginning: Building an Infrastructure for Change with Data

Twenty-five years ago, the foundation was laid for improving the health and well-being of older people living in nursing homes. It began with a groundbreaking collaboration between the Sinclair School of Nursing and the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services — the Quality Improvement Program for Missouri (QIPMO). Led by Marilyn Rantz, now a curators' distinguished professor emerita, the 1999 initiative launched a comprehensive effort to enhance the quality of care for older adults living in nursing homes.

QIPMO's early efforts focused on helping nursing homes make evidenced-based changes by establishing a foundation for data collection and quality improvement. By leveraging data and expert consultation, the QIPMO program has assisted nursing homes in identifying key areas for improvement and implementing effective

solutions. As these initial efforts expanded over the years, it became clear that the QIPMO model could be widely replicated beyond the Show-Me State. "The key takeaway is that every single nursing home that received our QIPMO services saw overall improvement," Rantz says. "Whether it's infection control practices, early illness identification or chronic disease management, the QIPMO team worked to ensure that essential evidence-based best practices were being followed around the clock. The program has helped improve hundreds — if not thousands — of lives."



Rantz (right) visits with a resident at TigerPlace.

Similarly, in 1996, the concept of aging in place (AIP) began to take shape. Focused on promoting independence and helping older adults remain in their community homes as long as possible, AIP has been shown to increase longevity and improve overall quality of life.

By 1999, the first AIP demonstration project was launched for community dwelling older adults. The model integrated registered nurse care coordination with robust community-based health services. A milestone in this journey was the development of TigerPlace in 2004 — a pioneering public/private partnership between the School of Nursing and Americare. TigerPlace not only provided AIP services but also introduced technology—

enhanced care, making it a model for future endeavors. The affiliation between TigerPlace and Sinclair School of Nursing continues to the present day, with TigerPlace offering a unique opportunity for interprofessional student training in the care of older adults.

Expanding Impact With the Missouri Quality Initiative (MOQI)

In 2012, the establishment of the Missouri Quality Initiative (MOQI) marked another significant step forward. Supported by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Innovations Center and the Medicare-Medicaid Coordination Office, MOQI recruited 16 nursing homes in the St. Louis area and aimed to reduce avoidable hospitalizations while improving care for long-stay residents.

Its immediate success led to phase two, which expanded the initiative to include 24 additional nursing homes. This second phase focused on managing acute conditions within the nursing homes, thus preventing unnecessary hospitalizations and improving care continuity. The lessons continually learned in QIPMO were elemental to the success of MOQI.

“Care coordination is about identifying what people want in their life, what they need because of their health conditions and helping bridge that gap while simultaneously encouraging as much independence as possible from the individual,” says Popejoy, who was a lead investigator for MOQI. “It’s gathering strands of a web and keeping those strands together because health care is so scattered and so difficult to traverse.”

Forging the Foundation: Data and Technology Lead to Innovation

Coordinated care doesn’t happen without the school’s overarching commitment to improving systems. For Popejoy, it’s more than a commitment — it’s a quest.

With the foundation set by QIPMO and MOQI, the school continues to lead in the fields of elder care and aging in place. Thanks to a cast of leading-edge faculty researchers and intrepid leaders harnessing technology and innovative thinking, the future is now.

“The truth is, we have an expensive health care system with bad outcomes and not enough nurses,” Popejoy says. “How do we improve day-to-day, moment-to-moment outcomes for human beings and work through others to get that work done.”

Data Driven: Learning From the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic posed unprecedented challenges but also provided valuable insights.

Amy Vogelsmeier, MS(N) ’97, PhD ’08, and Popejoy received a \$1.9 million grant from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) to study the pandemic’s impact on nursing home staff and residents. Their research aimed to improve responses to respiratory healthcare-associated infections by learning from pandemic experiences and challenges.

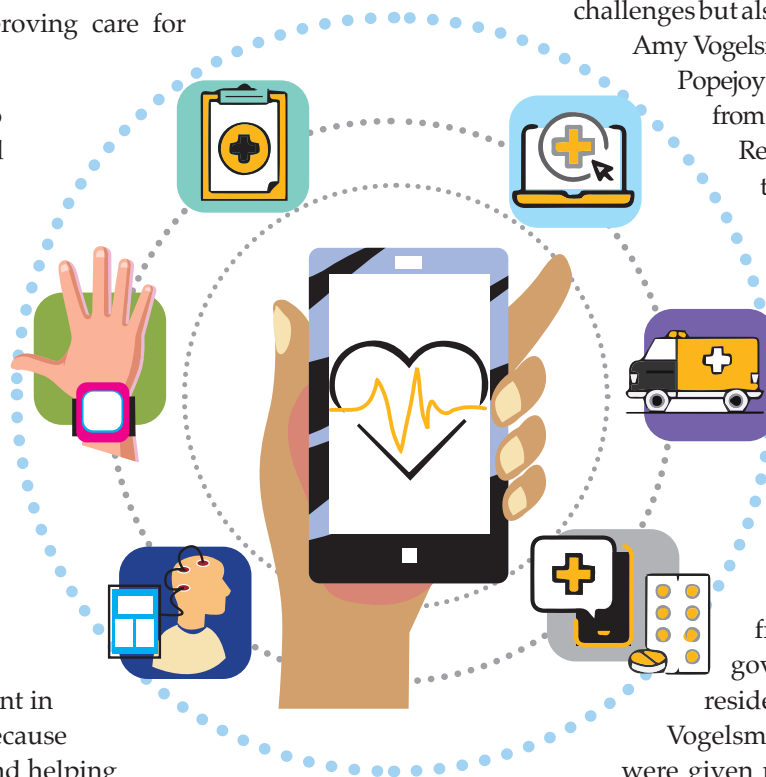
“Nursing homes had to respond to constantly changing requirements from the federal and state government about managing residents and working with staff,”

Vogelsmeier says. “Sometimes they were given new directives almost daily.

We are looking at the outcomes these nursing homes experienced as well as the processes employed.”

Embedding Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs)

In another significant study, Alisha Johnson, assistant professor, and Vogelsmeier explored the impact of full-time, embedded APRNs in nursing homes. Their study, funded by the Donaghue Foundation, focuses on how these APRNs influenced nursing home outcomes and their role during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research highlighted the benefits of having APRNs integrated into care teams, ►



including enhanced responses to acute situations and improved overall care. “Part of an APRN’s education includes leadership concepts and indirect care,” says Johnson. “APRNs help all boats rise. They help educate staff, facilitate difficult family and patient conversations, implement quality improvement initiatives and improve the system so that overall care improves.”

Innovations in Technology

Technology continues to play a transformative role in aging care. The Age-friendly Sustainable Smart and Equitable Technologies for Aging in Place (ASSETs for AIP) demonstration program focuses on developing and testing sensor-enhanced, team-based care coordination models. This initiative, led by principal investigators Popejoy and Blaine Reeder, an associate professor at the school, employs in-home sensors and digital health technologies to monitor daily living patterns and functional changes. Care coordinators worked with clients to set healthy lifestyle goals, modify home safety and improve communication with health care teams.

Reeder explains, “The focus of this approach is not the technology itself but how low-cost digital health solutions can sustainably support connections for older adults in their homes for coaching in self-management. Sensors and digital tools support aging in place by providing information about daily activity patterns and enabling telehealth discussions with the care coordination team. This approach brings as-needed expertise and discreet awareness to the home in ways that support individual strengths and goals for independence.”

Enhancing Communication Through Innovation to Reduce Hospital Transfers

In the quest to improve care, communication emerged as a crucial factor. Assistant Professor Kimberly Powell’s research explores the use of HIPAA-compliant text messaging to facilitate faster decision-making in nursing homes. This approach was supported by a \$1 million National Institute of Health grant, aimed at minimizing the need for costly and distressing hospital transfers.

“By using text messaging, bedside nurses can contact all parties involved instantly, which speeds up decision-making and allows for earlier interventions so there is the potential for the hospital transfer to be avoided,” Powell says. “It’s an easy, convenient, low-cost solution to a serious problem.”

The Future: Alzheimer’s and Dementia Care Innovations

Looking ahead, innovations in Alzheimer’s disease and dementia care are paving the way for further advancements. Assistant Professor Knoo Lee’s research, supported by the Alzheimer’s Association Research Grant, investigates remote sensing for identifying activities specific to the aging population.

By using inexpensive infrared sensors that can be installed in homes, behaviors such as frequent bathroom trips or other unusual movement patterns might tip health care providers to a patient’s health issues.

“No matter how advanced the technology is, if it’s only applicable and affordable to 5% of the population, we’re not addressing health equity,” Lee says. “We are trying to find a balance between the investment of the technology and the equitable application of those technologies.”

Additionally, Powell has new research recently funded by the Betty Irene Moore Fellowship for Nurse Leaders and Innovators, focusing on bridging the rural gap in dementia care through telehealth, ensuring that even remote communities have access to high-quality care.

“Transporting a resident to the hospital can be a very traumatic and stressful experience,” Powell says. “Whether it’s a fall in the middle of the night or a sudden change in vitals, if a nurse can quickly hop on a virtual call with a resident and make an assessment, perhaps an intervention plan can be developed that allows the resident to be treated in the nursing home, which saves time, money and an unnecessary transfer to the hospital.”

Conclusion: The Future of Aging Well

For the past 25 years, the Sinclair School of Nursing has been at the forefront of transforming elder care through relentless dedication, pioneering research and innovative practices. As the U.S. population continues to age, and efficient use of health care resources becomes increasingly critical, aging-in-place advances made at Mizzou will lead the way.

“The future of nursing is about being able to use data, to be analytical and to wade in unafraid,” Popejoy says. “It’s going to be about tenacity, persistence and courage — to stand up to a health care system that needs to be changed. It’s about the capacity to disrupt when things need to be disrupted and be educationally prepared to take your place in the system.” ■

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